Evelyn Underhill was born on 6th December 1875 in Wolverhampton. From an early age she described having mystical insights, and her deep interest in spiritual matters continued throughout her life. Between 1921 and 1924 her spiritual director was Baron Friedrich von Hügel, who encouraged her to place Jesus Christ more centrally at the heart of her reflections. After his death in 1925 she began taking on a prominent role in the Church of England, leading retreats at Pleshey and elsewhere, and as a spiritual guide to many. Amongst the books she published are ‘Mysticism’ (in 1911) and ‘Worship’ (in 1936). She was one of the first women theologians to give public lectures at English universities, and was the first woman allowed officially to teach Church of England clergy. She died on 15th June 1941.

The Pleshey Retreat House is located in the Essex village of Pleshey, and is the official Retreat House of the Diocese of Chelmsford. Quiet days and retreats continue to be held throughout the year, as pioneered by Evelyn Underhill. Many of her books and other personal possessions are still kept at the Retreat House, and her influence remains strong.

This course uses original artefacts belonging to Evelyn Underhill as a way of discovering more about prayer.
A note about the Bible passages from Paul’s Second Letter to Timothy

This course uses a new translation of 2 Timothy produced at the request of Canon Edward Carter. 2 Timothy is a uniquely personal letter written by Paul at the very end of his life. Indeed he is very clearly aware of his own near departure and part of the purpose of the letter is to encourage Timothy in his work based on what Paul has handed on. It is quite different in feel from the other pastoral letters (1Timothy and Titus) which are largely concerned with organisational issues.

My approach in producing this translation has been to render the Greek into English as closely as possible while also making the English readable. Certain features may feel unfamiliar because I have often partly reproduced the Greek syntax and have almost always both translated all the words present in the text and worked hard not to put in words that are not present in the text. The edition of the Greek New Testament I have used is Nestle Aland 28. I have tried where possible to incorporate the fact that — in a way very different from English — most Greek words have complementary overlapping meanings simultaneously. This inevitably makes the task of translation complex.

An illustration may help — from John 1: one of the most famous lines in the Gospels reads: “the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not ……” The next word is katalambano but this word can mean “lay hold of”, “seize”, “preoccupy”, “possess”, “overtake”, “understand”, “comprehend” (in various senses), “catch”, “hold”, “constrain”, “convict”. Many modern translations narrow it down to “and the darkness did not overcome it”. But you can see immediately from the variety that in fact the AV “comprehendeth it not” is actually closer to the mark.

And a very brief word about punctuation, paragraphs and sentences. Ancient Greek was written in continuous script without spacing or punctuation. That means that — within very broad parameters — the punctuation, paragraphs and sentences that appear both in modern editions of the Greek text and in all translations are editorial decisions.

Which brings me to my final point: all translations are acts of interpretation. If you compare a series of translations of the same text you will see that people have interpreted what is in front of them in the light of many different factors — personal, historical, doctrinal — and these have been both conscious and unconscious. Those I am aware of I have of course sought to ignore, but if you pick up something of which I am unaware, please let me know.

Nicholas Henshall, Dean of Chelmsford

Ω 5 Minutes
Final Prayers
Everyone is invited in turn to read their prayer. The whole group then join together to say this final prayer:

O God, Origin, Sustainer, and End of all your creatures: Grant that your Church, taught by your servant Evelyn Underhill, guarded evermore by your power, and guided by your Spirit into the light of truth, may continually offer to you all glory and thanksgiving and attain with your saints to the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have promised by our Saviour Jesus Christ; who with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

The Evelyn Underhill memorial, in the Chapel at Pleshey
10 Minutes

Creating a prayer postcard

The book of prayers which Evelyn Underhill used contains a number of 'biddings' or invitations to prayer which she pencilled in and used when she was leading groups. The bidding which Edd showed to Bishop Roger in her book at the start of the video clip was: *Let us ask for the gift of pure love.*

Using this bidding as a starting point, each member of the group is invited to write their own prayer on the postcard outline.

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Introduction

Welcome to this five part course about prayer. The course uses teaching from Evelyn Underhill as well as a series of meditations on Paul’s Second Letter to Timothy. Five specially made video clips also help bring Evelyn Underhill’s guidance to life for us today, encouraging us to be people of prayer and to discover more about the Pleshey Retreat House.

Towards the end of each session participants are invited to respond to a ‘bidding’ written by Evelyn Underhill herself, and to create a new prayer. These prayers are shared in the group and may then be taken up and used as part of regular private prayer times or in other ways.

Saint Paul encourages us to ‘pray constantly’ (I Thessalonians 5.17), and for Christians prayer must be grounded in daily life, just as life is grounded in prayer. This course is designed to help participants make that vision a continuing reality.

are few things more remarkable in Christian history than the continuity through many vicissitudes and under many disguises of the dominant strands in Christian worship. On the other hand the whole value of this personal life of worship abides in the completeness with which it is purified from all taint of egoism, and the selflessness and simplicity with which it is added to the common store. Here the individual must lose his life to begin it; the longing for personal expression, personal experience, safety, joy, must more and more be swallowed up in Charity. For the goal alike of Christian sanctification and Christian worship is the ceaseless self-offering of the Church, in and with Christ her head, to the increase of the glory of God.

Someone in the group reads the passage aloud and then a short pause for reflection is left before the group responds to what Evelyn Underhill has written.

The following questions may also be helpful to consider:

- How is the ‘great family’ that Evelyn Underhill writes of important in your own life as a Christian? In what ways does being a member of the church help you ‘lose your life to begin it’?

The Christian faith teaches that God is love, and that the love of God is revealed in the way Jesus gave everything on the Cross and was then raised to new life. Being a member of God’s family involves simply accepting these things as true, and then reflecting God’s love in life.

20 Minutes
Play the 'Praying with Evelyn Underhill, Part Five' video clip: Revd Edd Stock with Bishop Roger Morris

- Evelyn Underhill wrote her own prayers; how has it felt when you have tried doing the same?
- Bishop Roger explained how Evelyn Underhill put prayer and worship at the heart of things; what might this mean for you?
- Evelyn Underhill wrote about how the simplicity and humility of pure love can make us into 'contagious Christians', catching the love of God from each other; How could this vision be more true for you?
Euboulos greets you, and Poudes and Linos and Klaudia and all the brothers. 22 The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

Someone in the group reads the passage aloud while the others listen prayerfully (ideally without following the text).

Leave a few moments of quiet for reflection.

The passage is read aloud for a second time, and each member of the group is then invited to offer a word or short phrase from the passage to the others—something which has particularly struck them. Space is allowed for everyone to reflect on why their phrase is significant for them, and others may respond as moved to do so.

The following questions may also be helpful to consider:

- Paul mentions many people by name for different reasons; how does this create a picture of the various relationships he has? How do you feel these relationships shape his life?
- In verse 2 Paul urges Timothy to ‘announce the message’ in good times and in bad; what might this mean for you?

Once everyone has contributed to the reflection the passage is read for a third and final time.

Ø 20 Minutes

Excerpt from Evelyn Underhill's book 'Worship'

The worshipper, however lonely in appearance, comes before God as a member of a great family; part of the Communion of Saints, living and dead. His own small effort of adoration is offered “in and for all”. The first words of the Lord’s Prayer are always there to remind him of his corporate status and responsibility, in its double aspect. On one hand, he shares the great life and action of the Church, the Divine Society; however he may define that difficult term, or wherever he conceives its frontiers to be drawn. He is immersed in that life, nourished by its traditions, taught, humbled, and upheld by its saints. His personal life of worship, unable for long to maintain itself alone, has behind it two thousand years of spiritual culture, and around it the self-offerings of all devoted souls. Further, his public worship, and commonly his secret devotion too, are steeped in history and tradition; and apart from them, cannot be understood. There

Practical notes on using this course

This booklet includes everything needed for the course apart from the five specially made video clips. These are all posted on YouTube and can be freely accessed at the Diocese of Chelmsford YouTube channel. For more information search on YouTube or visit the Diocesan website:

http://www.chelmsford.anglican.org/about/youtube

If you wish to burn these video clips onto a DVD follow this procedure to download them free of charge:
1) Go to the correct YouTube page
2) Insert ‘ss’ immediately before the word ‘youtube’ in the page name
3) Hit the carriage return button
4) Click on the yellow ‘Download’ button to save the file to your computer
Session One: ‘Let us ask for an increase & deepening of our faith’

Ø 5 Minutes

Opening Prayers

Lord, you will guide me with your counsel
and afterwards receive me with glory.

All Lord, you will guide me with your counsel
and afterwards receive me with glory.
For I am always with you;
you hold me by my right hand.

All And afterwards receive me with glory.
Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit.

All Lord, you will guide me with your counsel
and afterwards receive me with glory.

from Psalm 73

A short time of quiet or open prayer follows, in particular to allow prayers
for any members of the group who’ve been unable to attend the session or
for anything significant in the life of the church and community.

Ø 10 Minutes

Group questions and conversation starters

● How would you describe a moment when you
first knew your Christian faith was ‘alive’?
● In what way would you describe a time when
your faith 'deepened’?
● Have you ever felt that your prayer life has been
'on hold' or stagnating? What was it like when that
time came to an end?

Ø 20 Minutes

Bible Reflection: 2 Timothy 4.1-22

4.1 I bear witness before God and Christ Jesus who comes to judge
the living and the dead, and his appearance and his kingdom: 2
announce the message, press it in good times and bad, refute, warn,
encourage, in all patience and teaching. 3 For there will be a time
when people will reject healthy teaching and they will accumulate
Teaching according to their own desires, tickling their ears, 4 and
they will turn away from hearing the truth and they will turn off
course towards myths.

5 And you be sober in all things, put up with suffering, do the
work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry. 6 For I am being poured
out like a drink offering and the time of my departure stands near.
7 I have fought the good fight, I have completed the race, I have kept
the faith; 8 now there lies in store for me the crown of
righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me
on that day, and not only to me but also to all those who have
longed for his appearing.

9 Be eager to come to me swiftly; 10 for Demas has left me,
loving the present age, and has gone to Thessalonica, Kreskes to
Galatia, Titos to Dalmatia; 11 Lukas alone is with me. Get Mark
and bring him with you for he is useful to me in ministry. 12 I sent
Tychikos to Ephesus. 13 The coat which I left in Troas with Karpos
bring when you come, also the books particularly the parchments.
14 Alexander the coppersmith informed against me badly; the
Lord will pay him back according to his works; 15 you also guard
against him, for he stands very much opposed to our teachings.

16 At my first defence hearing no one was with me, but
everyone deserted me; may it not be reckoned against them. 17 The
Lord stood by me and filled me with power, so that through me the
proclamation might be fulfilled and all nations might hear. And I
was rescued from the mouth of the lion. 18 The Lord will protect me
from every evil act and will save me for his heavenly kingdom: to
him be glory for ever and ever, amen.

19 Greet Prisca and Aquila and the household of
Onesiphoros. 20 Erastos stayed in Corinth and I left behind
Trophimos sick in Miletus. 21 Hurry to come before winter.
Session Five: ‘Let us ask for the gift of pure love’

Ø 5 Minutes

Opening Prayers

The Lord is my strength and my song:
he has become my salvation.

All  The Lord is my strength and my song:
he has become my salvation.
I shall not die, but live,
and declare the works of the Lord.

All  He has become my salvation.
Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

All  The Lord is my strength and my song:
he has become my salvation.

from Psalm 118

A short time of quiet or open prayer follows, in particular to allow prayers
for any members of the group who’ve been unable to attend the session or
for anything significant in the life of the church and community.

Ø 10 Minutes

Group questions and conversation
starters

● Which moments in life have taught you most
about the meaning of love?
● How have you connected the very gift of life
with the love you receive from God?

Bible Reflection: 2 Timothy 1.1-14

1.1 Paul apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God according
to the promise of life in Christ Jesus 2 to Timothy beloved, child:

  grace, mercy, peace from God our father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

  3 I give thanks to God whom I worship with a clear
conscience, from my forebears, as I make unceasing remembrance
of you in my prayers by night and day, 4 desiring to see you,
remembering your tears, that I may be filled with joy, 5 being
reminded of the sincere faith in you which lived first in your
grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and I am persuaded is
also in you. 6 For which reason I remind you to set on fire again the
grace of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

  7 For God did not give you a spirit of cowardice but of power
and love and self-control. 8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the
witness of our Lord nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering
with the Gospel according to the power of God, 9 who saves us and
calls us by a holy calling not according to our works but according
to his own purpose and grace, given to us in Christ Jesus before the
everal ages, 10 and made visible now through the appearance of
our Saviour Christ Jesus – abolishing death and bringing to light
life and immortality through the Good News 11 for which I was
made herald and apostle and teacher 12 which is the reason I also
suffer these things. But I am not ashamed for I know in what I have
put my trust and I am confident that what has been entrusted to me
he is able to keep safe for that day.

  13 Hold to the pattern of healthy teaching which you heard
from me in the faith and love which is in Christ Jesus; 14 guard the
good tradition handed on to you through the Holy Spirit which is
living in you.

● Someone in the group reads the passage aloud while the others listen
prayerfully (ideally without following the text).
● Leave a few moments of quiet for reflection.
● The passage is read aloud for a second time, and each member of the
group is then invited to offer a word or short phrase from the passage to
the others—something which has particularly struck them. Space should
be allowed for everyone to reflect on why their phrase is significant for them, and others may respond as moved to do so.

The following questions may also be helpful to consider:

- Verse 5 speaks of a faith that is handed down through the generations; how has this been important in your life?
- Verse 6 uses the picture of the grace of God which is in you being ‘set on fire’; how does this image resonate with you?
- In verse 11 Paul writes about being a herald, apostle and teacher; in what ways do these describe your life of faith?
- Verse 14 describes faith as being like guarding a tradition; how does this description appeal to you?

● Once everyone has contributed to the reflection the passage is read for a third and final time.

Ø 20 Minutes

Excerpt from Evelyn Underhill's book 'Worship'

The double orientation to the natural and the supernatural, testifying at once to the unspeakable otherness of God transcendent and the intimate nearness of God incarnate, is felt in all the various expressions of genuine Christian worship. The monk or nun rising to recite the Night Office that the Church’s praise of God may never cease, and the Quaker waiting in silent assurance on the Spirit given at Pentecost; the ritualist, ordering with care every detail of a complicated ceremonial that God may be glorified thereby, and the old woman content to boil her potatoes in the same sacred intention; the Catholic burning a candle before the symbolic image of the Sacred Heart or confidently seeking the same Divine Presence in the tabernacle, and the Methodist or Lutheran pouring out his devotion in hymns to the Name of Jesus; the Orthodox bowed down in speechless adoration at the culminating moment of the Divine Mysteries, and the Salvationist marching to drum and tambourine behind the banner of the Cross – all these are here at one. Their worship is conditioned by a concrete fact; the stooping down of the Absolute to disclose Himself within the narrow human radius, the historical incarnation of the Eternal Logos within time.

Ø 5 Minutes

Final Prayers

Everyone is invited in turn to read their prayer. The whole group then join together to say this final prayer:

O God, Origin, Sustainer, and End of all your creatures: Grant that your Church, taught by your servant Evelyn Underhill, guarded evermore by your power, and guided by your Spirit into the light of truth, may continually offer to you all glory and thanksgiving and attain with your saints to the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have promised by our Saviour Jesus Christ; who with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. Amen.
10 Minutes

Creating a prayer postcard

The book of prayers which Evelyn Underhill used contains a number of 'biddings' or invitations to prayer which she pencilled in and used when she was leading groups. The bidding which Edd showed to Louise in her book at the start of the video clip was: Let us ask for a new realization of Christ’s Presence in our daily lives.

Using this bidding as a starting point, each member of the group is invited to write their own prayer on the postcard outline.

Someone in the group reads the passage aloud and then a short pause for reflection is left before the group responds to what Evelyn Underhill has written.

The following questions may also be helpful to consider:
- Which of Evelyn Underhill’s descriptions of worship most surprises you? Which feels most familiar? Why?
- How would you describe the meeting of the ‘natural and the supernatural’ in your own words? How do you feel this connects to worship and prayer?

Christians have often spoken about God being both ‘transcendent’ and ‘immanent’. At first glance these seem to be opposites. A transcendent God is ‘above and beyond’ the world—all seeing and all powerful, and completely different to us human beings. An immanent God is part of the world—within it, and sharing in everything that human beings experience.

It is Jesus Christ who makes both these things possible. He is the exact imprint of the transcendent God’s very being, but he is also born of a woman and suffered the pain of an earthly death on the cross.

Evelyn Underhill teaches us that genuine Christian worship testifies to both these truths. It is good to reflect how our worship in church might properly honour God’s awesome transcendence; and it is equally important to think about how acts of Christian worship point us to the intimate nearness of God in Christ.

20 Minutes

Play the 'Praying with Evelyn Underhill, Part One' video clip: Revd Edd Stock and the Youth Group

- Which person in the clip most intrigued you? Why?
- Was there anything particular that struck you about the Pleshey Retreat House? What kind of place do you feel it is? If you’ve visited before, what do you most enjoy about going there?
- Which of the items that belonged to Evelyn Underhill most appealed to you? Why?
10 Minutes

Creating a prayer postcard

The book of prayers which Evelyn Underhill used contains a number of 'biddings' or invitations to prayer which she pencilled in and used when she was leading groups. The bidding which was found in the book at the end of this session's video clip is: *Let us ask for an increase and deepening of our faith.*

Using this bidding as a starting point, each member of the group is invited to write their own prayer on the postcard outline.

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The following questions may also be helpful to consider:

- Evelyn Underhill writes that Christians should use the whole of their existence as ‘sacramental material’; how do you feel you’ve contributed to the glory of God in the everyday things of life?
- Does Evelyn Underhill’s description of appointed prayers, blessings and dedications for different times of day and activities appeal to you? Is this something you do at all?

Sometimes being a Christian is treated like a private hobby—an activity that gives people pleasure, and which they give up a certain amount of time for. However, it is better to understand Christianity as a kind of bedrock on which everything else in life is built. If that is true, Christians should recognise that every part of life is in some way an expression of their faith. Making this ‘real’ can be a challenge, but seeing every moment as an opportunity for prayer and praise is a powerful thing.

20 Minutes

Play the 'Praying with Evelyn Underhill, Part Four' video clip: Revd Edd Stock with Louise Nelstrop

- Louise suggested that prayer is work, and that we tend to forget this; how is prayer part of your ‘work’?
- In the video prayer was described as being the way that we ‘return love for love’; do you feel this describes your pattern of prayer?
- Louise felt that Evelyn Underhill would never have seen prayer as selfish or individualistic; how might we avoid our prayers being 'selfish'?
The passage is read aloud for a second time, and each member of the
group is then invited to offer a word or short phrase from the passage to
the others—something which has particularly struck them. Space is
allowed for everyone to reflect on why their phrase is significant for them,
and others may respond as moved to do so.

The following questions may also be helpful to consider:

- The start of this passage includes a list explaining what people will
  be like in ‘difficult times’; which of these descriptions rings most
  true for you or describes something you’ve come across?
- In verses 16 and 17 Paul encapsulates the significance of scripture;
  how is the Bible an important part of your daily life, preparing you
  for ‘every good work’?

Once everyone has contributed to the reflection the passage is read for a
third and final time.

Ø 20 Minutes

Excerpt from Evelyn Underhill's book 'Worship'

Arising from its incarnational character, and indeed closely connected
with it, is the fact that Christian worship is always directed towards the
sanctification of life. All worship has a creative aim, for it is a movement of
the creature in the direction of Reality; and here, the creative aim is that
total transfiguration of the created order in which the incarnation of the
Logos finds its goal. Christian worship, then, is to be judged by the degree
in which it tends to Holiness; since this is the response to the pressure of
the Holy which is asked of the Church and of the soul. The Christian is
required to use the whole of his existence as sacramental material; offer it
and consecrate it at every point, so that it may contribute to the Glory of
God. Historical Christianity, with its appointed prayers for each period of
the day and night, its blessings of every meal and every activity, its solemn
consecrations of birth and marriage, its rites for the restoring of the sinful
and the sanctifying of sickness and death, its loving care for the departed,
following the rhythm of human existence from its beginning to its apparent
end and beyond, has always shown itself sharply aware of this. These

Ø 5 Minutes

Final Prayers

Everyone is invited in turn to read their prayer. The whole
group then join together to say this final prayer:

O God, Origin, Sustainer, and End of all your creatures:
Grant that your Church, taught by your servant Evelyn
Underhill, guarded evermore by your power, and guided
by your Spirit into the light of truth, may continually
offer to you all glory and thanksgiving and attain with
your saints to the blessed hope of everlasting life, which
you have promised by our Saviour Jesus Christ; who
with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God,
now and for ever. Amen.
Session Two: ‘Let us ask for the grace of perseverance’

Ø 5 Minutes

Opening Prayers

Forsake me not, O Lord; be not far from me, O my God.

All Forsake me not, O Lord; be not far from me, O my God.

Make haste to help me, O Lord of my salvation.

All Be not far from me, O my God.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

All Forsake me not, O Lord; be not far from me, O my God.

from Psalm 38

A short time of quiet or open prayer follows, in particular to allow prayers for any members of the group who’ve been unable to attend the session or for anything significant in the life of the church and community.

Ø 10 Minutes

Group questions and conversation starters

● When have you had to demonstrate particular perseverance in the face of difficulties or challenges? What helped you get through?

● Have you ever felt angry with God? How did that feel?

Ø 20 Minutes

Bible Reflection: 2 Timothy 3.1-17

3.1 And know this - that in the last days difficult times will threaten; 2 for people will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, arrogant, blasphemers, faithless to parents, unhankful, unholy, 3 without natural affection, implacable¹, backbiting, impotent, savage, not loving the good, 4 traitors, out of control, deluded, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having the outward appearance of piety but denying its power; avoid these people. 6 For from these are those who go into houses and take prisoner silly women heaped up with sins and led by all sorts of desires, 7 always studying and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. 8 In the way Iannis and Iambres stood up against Moses, so these people – who have destroyed their understanding and fail to pass the test about faith – stand up against the truth.

9 But they will not make much more headway, for their lack of understanding will be very clear to everyone, as also was theirs².

10 You have followed closely my teaching, my conduct, my purpose, my faith, my patience, my love, my endurance, 11 my persecutions, my suffering, everything that happened to me in Antioch, in Iconium, in Lystra – such persecutions I endured and the Lord rescued me from all of them. 12 And indeed all those who wish to live righteously in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

13 Bad people and imposters make headway for the worse leading astray and being led astray. 14 But you abide in the things you learnt and are established in, knowing from which people you learned, 15 and that from childhood you know the sacred writings, which have power to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, for argument, for putting straight, for training in righteousness, 17 so that the person who belongs to God may be ready, prepared for every good work.

¹ implacable: literally, without drink offerings, therefore not allowing a truce

² i.e. Iannis and Iambres

● Someone in the group reads the passage aloud while the others listen prayerfully (ideally without following the text).

● Leave a few moments of quiet for reflection.
Session Four: ‘Let us ask for a new realization of Christ’s presence in our daily lives’

5 Minutes

Opening Prayers

Your salvation is near to those who fear you; that glory may dwell in our land.

All Your salvation is near to those who fear you; that glory may dwell in our land. Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

All That glory may dwell in our land. Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

All Your salvation is near to those who fear you; that glory may dwell in our land.

from Psalm 85

A short time of quiet or open prayer follows, in particular to allow prayers for any members of the group who’ve been unable to attend the session or for anything significant in the life of the church and community.

10 Minutes

Group questions and conversation starters

● What things do you most enjoy in daily life? For example, what hobbies do you enjoy?
● How do you consider your work (paid or unpaid) to be a central part of daily life?
● How much of a pattern do you feel your daily life has?

20 Minutes

Bible Reflection: 2 Timothy 1.15-2.13

15 You know this – that all those in Asia turned away from me, among them Phygelos and Hermogenes. 16 May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphoros, because many times he gave me relief from toil and was not ashamed of my chains, 17 but when he was in Rome he eagerly searched for me and found me; 18 may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day. And the ministry he exercised in Ephesus you know better.

2.1 So you, my child, be strengthened in the grace which is in Christ Jesus, 2 and what you heard from me through many witnesses, entrust these things to faithful people who will be capable also of teaching others. 3 Share in sufferings as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 4 No one joining up as a soldier gets entangled in the ordinary business of life in order to make a good impression on the person enlisting the soldiers. 5 And if someone is competing, they are not crowned unless they compete according to the rules. 6 It is the working farmer who must first have a share in the fruits. 7 Think about what I am saying – for the Lord will give you understanding in all things.

8 Remember Jesus Christ risen from the dead, from the seed of David, according to my Good News, 9 for which I am suffering evil even as far as chains as an evil doer, but the word of God is not chained; 10 because of this I endure everything for the sake of the chosen ones, so that they also may find salvation in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

11 Faithful the word:

for if we have died with him, we also will live with him;
12 if we endure, we will also reign with him;

if we deny, he will also deny us;
13 if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he is not able to deny himself.

● Someone in the group reads the passage aloud while the others listen prayerfully (ideally without following the text).
● Leave a few moments of quiet for reflection.
● The passage is read aloud for a second time, and each member of the
group is then invited to offer a word or short phrase from the passage to the others—something which has particularly struck them. Space is allowed for everyone to reflect on why their phrase is significant for them, and others may respond as moved to do so.

The following questions may also be helpful to consider:

- Chapter 2 verse 3 speaks of ‘sharing in sufferings as a good soldier of Christ Jesus’; how is this description helpful for you?
- Paul links the death and resurrection of Jesus to his own life; is this something you have ever done?
- At the end of the passage Paul describes how God always remains faithful, even if we are faithless; how have you experienced this to be true?

Once everyone has contributed to the reflection the passage is read for a third and final time.

Ø 20 Minutes

Excerpt from Evelyn Underhill's book 'Worship'

A deep realism as regards human imperfection and sin, and also human suffering and struggle, is at the very heart of the Christian response to God; which if it is to tally with the Christian revelation of disinterested love as summed up on the Cross, must include the element of hardness, cost, and willing pain. It is this sacrificial suffering, this deliberate endurance of hardship for the sake of the Unseen, which gives nobility and depth to worship. The costly renunciations and total self-stripping of the consecrated life contribute something to the Church’s oblation, without which her reasonable and holy sacrifice would not be complete. The “altar of the Cross” is no idle phrase; but reminds us that Christianity is a sacrificial religion, and that Christian worship is unintelligible if we eliminate the tension which is inherent in it, and the unconditioned self-offering by which it is crowned.

Someone in the group reads the passage aloud and then a short pause for reflection is left before the group responds to what Evelyn Underhill has written.

Ø 5 Minutes

Final Prayers

Everyone is invited in turn to read their prayer. The whole group then join together to say this final prayer:

O God, Origin, Sustainer, and End of all your creatures: Grant that your Church, taught by your servant Evelyn Underhill, guarded evermore by your power, and guided by your Spirit into the light of truth, may continually offer to you all glory and thanksgiving and attain with your saints to the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have promised by our Saviour Jesus Christ; who with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. Amen.
Creating a prayer postcard

The book of prayers which Evelyn Underhill used contains a number of 'biddings' or invitations to prayer which she pencilled in and used when she was leading groups. The bidding which Edd showed to Gill in her book at the start of the video clip was: Let us ask God to lead us (in this retreat) more deeply into the world of prayer.

Using this bidding as a starting point, each member of the group is invited to write their own prayer on the postcard outline.

The following questions may also be helpful to consider:

- Evelyn Underhill urges a ‘deep realism’ about our imperfections and sin; how do you feel this can be achieved without being too gloomy or negative?
- How has a ‘deliberate endurance of hardship’ led you closer to God or helped you in your spiritual journey?
- If Christianity is a ‘sacrificial religion’ crowned by Christ’s self-offering, how do you feel this can fruitfully become part of our worship and our lives?

At the heart of the Christian faith is the account of Jesus’ death on a cross. In human terms, this tells of the pain and suffering that he experienced, and it includes the moment when he cried out, ‘My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?’ However, Christians believe that the death of Jesus points us not just to desolation, but also to the re-establishment of a connection between God and his creation. This is sometimes called the atonement—literally the ‘at-one-ment’ of heaven and earth.

Although there is a personal aspect of this, for those who respond to God’s grace with a commitment of faith, there is also a bigger sense in which the death and resurrection of Jesus forges a new relationship of hope for the whole of creation.

For Christians, life therefore must include a realistic approach to suffering and pain—but an approach that rests on hopefulness.

Play the 'Praying with Evelyn Underhill, Part Two' video clip: Revd Edd Stock with Jeremy Blenes

- Jeremy spoke about the challenge of loneliness and pain in life, and how this was especially difficult in the light of his new life in Christ; how do you feel Christians might best face the pains of life?
- Jeremy described one of his prayers in this way: 'Why do you let this happen, God?' Have you ever prayed this kind of prayer?
- Jeremy linked his prayers to hope. How has this been true for you?
10 Minutes

Creating a prayer postcard

The book of prayers which Evelyn Underhill used contains a number of 'biddings' or invitations to prayer which she pencilled in and used when she was leading groups. The bidding which Edd showed to Jeremy in her book at the start of the video clip was: Let us ask for the grace of perseverance.

Using this bidding as a starting point, each member of the group is invited to write their own prayer on the postcard outline.

The following questions may also be helpful to consider:

- Evelyn Underhill writes about the importance of history and how Christian revelation is embedded in history. What do you feel is challenging or difficult about this? Would it be easier if God didn’t intervene in history, but instead only provided timeless laws?
- Evelyn Underhill stresses the importance of the Christian year with its great festivals and seasons. What does the rhythm of the year mean to you? Which times of year or festivals are most significant for you?
- Oliver Cromwell tried to abolish Christmas. What would the world feel like without the great Christian festivals?

The Christian faith points us to ‘salvation history’. This is a belief that God’s purposes are revealed through the events that happen in history, and that there is an over-arching shape to history. This shape is expressed partly through what Tom Wright has called ‘acts of a play’: creation; fall; God’s chosen people; Jesus Christ; Pentecost and the Church; the Christian hope. These acts in a metaphorical play have spiritual significance because of the way in which they involve a relationship between heaven and earth. For a Christian, the most important thing about history is how the nearness of the kingdom of heaven changes and develops.

20 Minutes

Play the 'Praying with Evelyn Underhill, Part Three' video clip: Revd Edd Stock with Gill Frith

- What did you feel about Gill’s description of ‘another world’ which prayer makes connections into?
- How do you feel poetry could be like prayer? Do you have any favourite poems which help you as you pray or which draw you closer to God?
- If you have been on retreat, how would you describe this time? What would you say to someone who was thinking about going on a retreat?
The following questions may also be helpful to consider:

- In verse 15 Paul describes how we should ‘cut straight the word of truth’; what do you think he meant by this?
- Verse 21 describes how we can be vessels useful for God if we keep our lives pure; how is this a helpful image for you?
- In verse 22 Paul lists righteousness, faith, love, peace; how do you feel these are linked together?
- Verse 23 refers to avoiding arguments, and verse 25 to ‘gentleness’ in teaching opponents; how has such advice been helpful for you or in your church?
- In verse 26 Paul describes the deceiver catching people alive; how do you feel this changes someone’s world-view?

Once everyone has contributed to the reflection the passage is read for a third and final time.

20 Minutes

Excerpt from Evelyn Underhill's book 'Worship'

Since the Christian revelation is in its very nature historical – God coming the whole way to man, and discovered and adored within the arena of man’s life at one point in time, in and through the Humanity of Christ – it follows that all the historical events and conditions of Christ’s life form part of the vehicle of revelation. Each of them mediates God, disclosing some divine truth or aspect of divine love to us. Here lies the importance of the Christian year, with its recurrent memorials of the Birth, the Manhood, the Death and the Triumph of Jesus, as the framework of the Church’s ordered devotion. By and in this ancient sequence, with its three great moments of Epiphany, Easter and Pentecost, its detailed demonstration in human terms of the mysteries of Incarnation and Redemption, the Christian soul is led out through succession to a contemplation of the eternal action of God. In Christ, and therefore in all the states and acts of Christ, history and eternity meet.

Someone in the group reads the passage aloud and then a short pause for reflection is left before the group responds to what Evelyn Underhill has written.

5 Minutes

Final Prayers

Everyone is invited in turn to read their prayer. The whole group then join together to say this final prayer:

O God, Origin, Sustainer, and End of all your creatures: Grant that your Church, taught by your servant Evelyn Underhill, guarded evermore by your power, and guided by your Spirit into the light of truth, may continually offer to you all glory and thanksgiving and attain with your saints to the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have promised by our Saviour Jesus Christ; who with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. Amen.
Session Three: ‘Let us ask God to lead us more deeply into the world of prayer’

Ø 5 Minutes

Opening Prayers

Open my eyes, O Lord
that I may see the wonders of your law.

All Open my eyes, O Lord
that I may see the wonders of your law.
Lead me in the path of your commandments

All that I may see the wonders of your law.
Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit.

All Open my eyes, O Lord
that I may see the wonders of your law.

from Psalm 119

A short time of quiet or open prayer follows, in particular to allow prayers for any members of the group who’ve been unable to attend the session or for anything significant in the life of the church and community.

Ø 10 Minutes

Group questions and conversation starters

● Have you ever had an 'open my eyes' moment, when the wonders of God's presence and purposes have suddenly become clearer to you? How has it affected the way you see the world?
● In which place or places do you feel closest to God? Why do you think that is?

Ø 20 Minutes

Bible Reflection: 2 Timothy 2.14-26

14 Remind them of these things, begging them earnestly before God not to fight over words for no useful purpose, but only for the ruin of those who are listening. 15 Be eager to present yourself acceptable to God, a worker with no cause for shame, cutting straight the word of truth. 16 Avoid unholy empty talking, for it advances irreverence all the more 17 and their argument like gangrene will spread. Among them are Hymenaios and Philetos who have missed the target about the truth saying resurrection has already happened — and they are overturning some people’s faith.

19 However the strong foundation of God stands having this seal: “The Lord knows those who are his” and “Let everyone who calls on the name of the Lord keep out of the way of injustice.”

20 In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable purposes and some for dishonorable; 21 therefore if someone purifies themselves from these things, that person will be a vessel for honour, hallowed, useful to the master ready for every good work.

22 Flee the desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. 23 Reject the foolish and uninstructed speculations, knowing that they give birth to arguments; 24 a servant of the Lord must not fight but must be kind towards everyone, apt at teaching, long-suffering, 25 in gentleness teaching opponents, so that God may grant them a change of understanding to knowledge of the truth 26 and they may sober up from the deceiver’s snare, having been caught alive by him to do his will.

● Someone in the group reads the passage aloud while the others listen prayerfully (ideally without following the text).
● Leave a few moments of quiet for reflection.
● The passage is read aloud for a second time, and each member of the group is then invited to offer a word or short phrase from the passage to the others—something which has particularly struck them. Space is allowed for everyone to reflect on why their phrase is significant for them, and others may respond as moved to do so.